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SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC: INPUT FOR HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING

Ref: A. STATE 59944, B. PRAGUE 310

1. (SBU) Per Ref A, Post is providing input for a demarche prior to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw from September 28 - October 9, 2009.

The Interim Government

2. (SBU) The government of the Czech Republic (GOC) is currently an interim one, following the no-confidence vote in March that toppled the government of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek. The current government is led by Prime Minister Jan Fischer and will be in power until early parliamentary elections are held on October 9, 2009. Fischer's government has a limited political mandate but has listed fighting extremism as one of the issues it wants to address. It will only be in power until October and will not undertake any divisive issues. Extremism has been on the radar screen of the GOC lately given the heightened visibility of right-wing extremist groups and Roma issues (Ref B). Fischer's interim government is taking the problem seriously and has taken a number of steps to address the extremist and/or Roma issues.

Areas of Concern

3. (SBU) The broadest area of concern relating to the Roma issue in the Czech Republic is education reform. A World Bank-funded study (October 2008) done by the GOC said that education reform is critical to solving the long-term employment and social exclusion problems facing the Roma. It said that the GOC will need to focus on Roma youth in order to tackle these issues. A study commissioned by the previous Education Minister completed in January 2009 highlighted targeted assistance as the way to integrate Roma children into the mainstream education process. Country-specific suggestion for positive action: Reference the October 2008 World Bank-funded study and ask the GOC to move forward on the specific education reforms mentioned in the January 2009 study commissioned by the Education Minister, including targeted assistance in areas such as preparatory classes and teachers' assistants.

4. (SBU) Housing continues to be a significant challenge for the Roma. Over time, the Roma were driven out of city centers into ghettos known as "socially excluded areas." A 2008 study entitled "Social Exclusion of Roma and Czech Society," by the Gabal Analytical and Consulting Agency (GAC), noted that the key to solving the Roma problem is to gain broad public support for a Roma integration policy. The report recommended that the GOC issue a declaration which would be agreed to by all public bodies stating that social exclusion is a serious issue confronting Czech society. Country-specific suggestion for positive action: Reference this study and ask the GOC to move forward with such a declaration.

5. (SBU) There was a serious firebomb attack on a house in northern

Moravia in April, in which a two-year old girl was seriously burned.

In addition, another firebomb attack occurred in May in a small town outside of Prague; fortunately, no one was hurt. The police are investigating but thus far there have been no arrests. Country-specific suggestion for positive action: Urge the GOC to continue investigating these incidents and pursuing the culprits.

Notable Progress

16. (SBU) The Czech Chamber of Deputies overrode President Klaus' veto and passed an anti-discrimination bill, making it law. The law bans discrimination in employment, business, education and health care. Although the Czech Republic is the last country in the EU to pass such legislation, it should be noted as a positive step in a demarche made to the GOC.

17. (SBU) The current Minister for Human Rights, Michael Kocab, started his position in January 2009 and was the only Minister to survive the fall of Topolanek's government. After taking up his position, he quickly established the Agency for Social Exclusion of Roma Communities to combat the problems of exclusion encountered by the Roma. Kocab has also called for a fund to purchase the site of a Nazi-era Roma concentration camp as a memorial to the Roma Holocaust. These should be mentioned as progress steps.

18. (SBU) The Minister of Interior in the interim government, Martin Pecina, established a Special Anti-Extremism Task Force in late May, with the specific goal of eliminating extremism in the Czech Republic. The task force is headed by a former police official and head of the National Anti-Drug Squad, Jiri Komorous, and differs from the terrorism and extremist section of the Organized Crime Unit of the police, which only focuses on confronting extremists during

PRAGUE 00000354 002 OF 002

rallies and marches. The task force is taking a holistic approach to extremism and has laid out specific plans for fighting extremism, focusing on law enforcement and judicial aspects of the extremist problem. This included publishing an on-line manual for town halls and municipalities that contains specific information on banning or dissolving marches and demonstrations by extremist groups. The manual was put together by lawyers and experts on extremism at the request of town mayors who say they need help to counter growing extremism in the country. These efforts by the Ministry of the Interior to fight extremism are encouraging and should be noted in a demarche.

Thompson-Jones